Shortage of Foods and Unemployment

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(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)
Editor: MAGANBHAI P. DESAI

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"CONGRESS SOCIALISM"

(*By Maganbhai P. Desai*)

In one of his books Romain Rolland has put a commentary upon European Socialism in the mouth of one of his characters, which deserves to be remembered today. I am sorry I cannot at present find it out to quote it. It said that it is the bane of European Socialism that it splits into parties and groups on ideological differences and deviations and thus goes on weakening itself. The truth and aptness of these words can also be illustrated from the history of socialist thought and parties in India, even though they are hardly two decades old. With the Congress entering the arena — as it seems to — with a new formulation — "Socialistic Pattern of Society" — may it not unnecessarily enter into a wordy quarrel without being compensated for it by any clarity and strength ?

What this pattern would mean is rather obscure. Those speakers at Avadi who discussed the Resolution were blessedly silent about it. On the other hand, we have already begun to have qualified socialism formulae. For example, Dr. Radhakrishnan has talked of *Ethical* Socialism — something on a par with what is called Christian Socialism in Europe. If I forget not, we had 'Theosophical Socialism' a few years ago from a young theosophist in the thirties when we were fighting for Swaraj. Already we have had 'Democratic Socialism', 'Nationalist Socialism'; one may as well say Russia has 'Dictatorialist Socialism'. Cannot America also say, we have a 'socialist democracy', the word 'socialist' being in the sense of equality of status and opportunities to all irrespective of class or caste or creed ? What I mean to say is, the Avadi resolution on 'Congress Socialism' helps very little at a time when we want definite terms about our future aim and programme for it. *Thought* of Delhi, in its issue of 15-1-'55, has well remarked that,

> "In India, where the very premises of Socialism do not exist and where we do not have an overabundance of efficient administration, to talk of Socialism, with emphasis on nationalization, is to indulge in an absurdity."

And it concludes its remarks on "Congress Socialism" with the words that deserve our serious thought:

> "What India needs is a planned effort to raise the standard of living of its people......The Congress leaders should avoid falling for phrases they do not understand and have more respect for what they have done and are doing, without being committed to any dogma. The faith of their own master should be more than sufficient for them. Gandhianism, in scientific elaboration and modern formulation, should remain their inexhaustible inspiration. That alone, to use a pedestrian phrase, is true Socialism for them and for India."

Such 'scientific elaboration and modern formulation' has been amply done by our Constitution, which, without being trapped into catchwords or fashionable phrases, clearly lays down the "Directive Principles of State Policy". It is difficult to see in what way the Avadi formulation furthers the objectives stated in 'Article 1 of the Congress Constitution and in the Preamble and Directive Principles of State Policy of the Constitution of India', except to bring in the term "Socialistic" which confuses more than clears or amplifies them any way.

29-1-'55

Seventh Sarvodaya Sammelan

The 7th annual Sarvodaya Sammelan is going to be held from 25th to 27th March, 1955 at Puri, (Orissa). Members of the Sarvodaya Samaj whose names have been duly enrolled before the 31st December, 1954 should apply for Railway Concessions before the 15th February, 1955, and remit the necessary lodging fees of Rupees three per head by Money Order in advance to my address P.O. Buniadganj, Gaya (Bihar).

29-1-'55

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Secretary, Sarvodaya Sammelan

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ECONOMICS OF KHADI PURCHASES

(*By V. L. Mehta*)

The appeal to the public to use Khadi can be justified on various grounds; but the ethical or emotional considerations about its place in an economic order based on non-violence or its association with Mahatma Gandhi apart, the question may be examined here in its purely economic aspect.

The main economic justification that needs to be emphasized is the one which has led the Planning Commission, at various places in its Report, to recognize the indispensability of village industries in the national economy. It accords to these a central place in the programme of rural development, the same as for the reorganization of agricultural production. The various village industries are deemed by the Commission to be an essential feature of rural reconstruction, firstly, because they provide for the production of consumers' goods without the outlay of capital expenditure on any considerable scale, and, secondly, because they provide employment in rural setting to surplus or partially employed labour on the land.

How important these considerations are will be clear from a glance at the following table compiled on the basis of the Commission's Report:

	Development expenditure (in crores) Rs.	Additional No. of persons employed annually (in lakhs)	
Industry (including small-scale industries) ..	140.33	4	
Major Irrigation and Power Projects ..	561.40	7½	
Agriculture ..	360.43	23	
Works and Buildings (under Central Ministry) ..	11.02	1	
Roads ..	108.87	2	
Cottage Industries ..	27	20	(Plus 36 provided with fuller employment)

From these figures it is obvious what an enormous contribution is expected to be made by the development of cottage industries by way of additional employment. This share is particularly significant in the light of the outlay involved on the various sectors of development. On the basis of the figures presented in the Report of the Planning Commission, it is safe to make the assertion that no other aspect of the national programme of development makes such a large contribution to the solution of the problem of unemployment with so little capital outlay. While the raising of the standard of living of the bulk of the population is one of the objectives of the Five Year Plan, that object is itself incapable of achievement unless the growth of unemployment is held in check. Hence in the present context, as Parliament has recently emphasized, there is no problem so stupendous in its magnitude as that of mass unemployment.

Accordingly, for all whose concern it should be to assist in the fulfilment of our Plan of national economic development, the active promotion of cottage industries must become a matter of public duty.

There are two ways of participation in this endeavour. One is to undertake productive labour or to aid in the economic organization of those who take to such labour. Some among us can assist in the work of economic organization, but all can scarcely do so. But all of us can render aid by extending patronage to the products of these cottage industries, even at some sacrifice.

A majority of our cottage industries suffer because of the limited markets they can command and the neglect of the products, particularly by urban customers. Reorganization, improvement in technique and expansion are hardly possible if the products fail to find a market. Some price preference and some quality preference are inevitable. We should deem it our duty to make the sacrifice in the shape of an increased price, when such a sacrifice is in the general interest of the national economy and not merely for the benefit of a few producers.

The call for such sacrifice will be insistent where, as in respect of Khadi production, the section of the producers concerned is not limited in number but extends to or can be co-extensive with the large numbers of men and women in rural areas who are unemployed or underemployed, either throughout the year or in the off-season. That is why a demand is put forward for the purchase of Khadi cloth to the exclusion of other fabrics. After agriculture, Khadi alone can become a basic industry, for no other cottage industry is capable of providing employment, either in the rural setting or elsewhere, for such large numbers without much outlay of capital, mainly with the aid of local resources, and with only a little preliminary preparation and instruction.

The main obstacle to its development today is the absence of a market that can absorb the growing volume of production. That production, at the end of the Five Year Plan as formulated by the All India Spinners' Association is expected to reach the figure of 250 million yards of cloth. Even if Khadi costs a little more than other handloom and mill-made cloth, the additional amount of expenditure involved will not be deemed considerable when viewed as part of a contribution towards mitigating the evil of rural unemployment. The difference between the price paid for Khadi and for other varieties of cloth represents the increased outlay that has to be incurred for the purpose of assisting in the orderly revival of the most suitable subsidiary occupation in rural areas and the provision in these areas of additional employment of an acceptable type.

In many countries, there are schemes of social security which protect all citizens against unemployment. In India, when schemes of social security are devised, we think mostly in terms of industrial labour employed in large-scale industries or other large-scale enterprises. But the number of such industrial workers is relatively small, the large mass of our manual workers being engaged in the agricultural industry, for whom and for whose families underemployment and partial employment are not a residual problem, but are a constant nightmare. To devise schemes of social security for one section of workers and not for others would be unjustifiable discrimination and would obviously be against the interests of national solidarity. To provide against unemployment in rural areas is, however, a tremendous financial undertaking, practically beyond the present capacity of the Central or State Governments to undertake.

Apart from that, even if a scheme could be devised, the large numbers involved will still remain without work. Where the numbers involved are small or the unemployment among the groups or individuals concerned is but a passing phase, being without work may not present a sociological problem. But to permit millions to remain without work, some from year's end to year's end and some others for long periods, is wrong from the economic, as well as the sociological point of view. To allow these large numbers to subsist on doles, even if that were feasible — which is far from being the case — would be anti-social. The revival of Khadi offers, as Mahatma Gandhi claimed, the only solution.

Although the bulk of the employment that will be provided through the extension of Khadi production will be for hand-spinners, most of whom may be part-time workers, the fact should not be overlooked that, in addition, there is quite a large number of other artisans who are full-time workers, such as, for instance, carders and weavers. The hand-loom weaving industry suffers from

a chronic shortage of supply of yarn, and the capacity for production that is available lies largely idle. Weavers seldom get a full month's work. The effect of increased production of hand-spun yarn will be to provide additional full-time employment to hand-loom weavers and to other artisans as well.

It may be that in course of time the wide disparities in price levels that exist today may get lessened and, in the meantime, the industry has the prospect, under State protection, to get reorganized on a basis that enables it efficiently to perform the economic function assigned to it in the national plan. The lasting quality of Khadi of standard varieties, it may be claimed, is not inferior to that of corresponding mill-made cloth; nevertheless, attempts will be made by the Khadi and Village Industries Board to raise the standard of production. Increase of production may help in lowering costs and some reduction may also be brought about through improvements effected, with the aid of the Board, in purchasing cotton and in organizing facilities for marketing. But the main factor leading to lower costs will be the use of improved techniques, the introduction, after experiment and research, of more efficient tools and implements and the pursuit of better methods of production which aspects of the work before it have already engaged the attention of the Board even in the early stages of its career.

'DOCTORS WARN: DON'T SMOKE'

Magazine Digest for September 1954 reproduces an article by Dr. DeWitt Fox, M.D., which is summarized below:

'In 1950 some 60 million Americans blew up into the air the smoke of 4 lakhs million cigarettes. Every 2 seconds 25,000 cigarettes are lighted to the tune of $ 250. For this habit the American public paid half a billion dollars — more than we pay all our school teachers in the U. S. or the value of all the automobiles we make each year.

'The personal financial aspects are equally appalling. Take a man at 20 who smokes a pack a day. During his smoking life — 40 years — he will burn up $ 3,000, the value of a beach cottage, a fine car or a trip to Europe. If he is a two-pack-a day man, the cost will be $ 6,000, a college education for his son or a trip abroad on a luxury line.

'The smoker in his lifetime is worth a year or two of his salary to the cigarette companies. He works for them, not for himself. He deprives his family of many of the fine things in life while he burns them up in smoke.

'But the financial aspect is not so important as the ill-health that follows in the wake of this gigantic volume of smoke......

'Dr. Ochsner, professor at Tulane Medical School is one of America's leading doctors and an authority on lung cancer. He said:

'"I am a physician and realize the harmful effects of tobacco. I feel that it does even more harm than alcohol. I don't advocate drinking. But anything one does to excess is harmful. And there are very few people who smoke moderately."

'He added: "Tobacco is an addiction that is as bad as morphine and it is almost as hard to break......I hope the time will come when we will have some sort of legislation against tobacco."

'There is little control over tobacco, though nicotine is listed as one of the most potent poisons — capable of producing death if the amount in only about 5 cigarettes were injected directly into the blood stream in a single dose.

'Tobacco smoke contains a number of other chemicals including benzopyrine, which is responsible for the new scourge of lung cancer that is cutting down men between the ages of 40 and 55.

'As Ochsner says, the increase in lung cancer bears a close parallel to the sale of cigarettes. In 1920 lung cancer was only 1.1 per cent of all cancer; in 1948 it was 8.3 per cent.

'"Twenty-five years ago," said Dr. Ochsner, "I saw only one cancer of the lung in 4 years. During the last 15 years I have seen thousands. I am convinced there is a direct relationship between smoking and cancer of the lung. Meantime, pipe and cigar smokers, though less likely to get lung cancer, are more prone to cancer of the lip and tongue."

'In a study of 684 lung-cancer patients Dr. Wynder and Dr. Graham found that 96.5% of the men were either moderately heavy smokers or chain smokers (10 to 35 cigarettes in a day for 20 years). It is a rarity to find a patient with lung cancer who does not smoke.

'The rapid increase in coronary heart disease in younger people, according to Dr Ochsner, is largely due to tobacco. Nowadays people are more nervous and in turn smoke excessively......

'Smoking can also produce an increased pulse in some persons, even a racing or irregular heart-beat. This is the so-called smoker's heart......

'Puffing a cigarette can also elevate blood pressure......

'This effect of tobacco on the heart convinced President Eisenhover of the wisdom of stopping. His blood pressure and pulse immediately returned to normal. Since then he has been healthier......

'Another malady you help yourself to avoid when you don't smoke is stomach ulcer. Smokers have more than their share of stomach ulcers....

'Like Dr. Ochsner many other physicians will not treat an ulcer patient who smokes......

'Nicotine blindness can result from excessive smoking......

'"It has been suggested", commented Dr. Ochsner, "that one should smoke because smoking calms the nerves. It does not calm the nerves at all; it makes one more nervous. The only thing a cigarette does for the nervous man is to give him something to do with his hands......But a pencil to doodle could serve the same purpose with no danger to his health."'

V. G. D.

HARIJAN

Feb. 12 1955

SHORTAGE OF GOODS AND UNEMPLOYMENT

(*By Maganbhai P. Desai*)

I stated in a previous number that mills or factories should not be in an unhealthy or unfair competition with village and cottage industries in the field of supplying the basic necessities of our people such as food and cloth ; to that end they should be properly regulated and controlled, and if found necessary government should take charge of them.

This question has come to the forefront because we now want to establish an economic order wherein everyone of our men and women is usefully and gainfully employed. We want to arrange things in such a manner that everyone of them is able to earn his or her livelihood adequately and with self-respect. By adequate livelihood I mean that one would be in a position to earn a certain minimum of fixed income. This is the main objective of a true socialistic order and the theory of Socialism lays down that in order to achieve this aim industries should be under the ownership of or properly controlled by government.

Let us look at the question from another angle. Admittedly it is considered one of the duties of government to see that for the working, growth and maintenance of various national industries, old as well as new, they should be protected against their foreign counterparts who may kill or suppress them by competition. It is admitted on all hands that government should regulate its financial and export and import policies, and keep a close watch on the custom or excise duties and the railway rates etc. to this end. All these matters are to be constantly watched and seen into by government for that purpose. In the same manner it must be seen that large-scale capitalistic industries do not kill or suppress by unfair competition the small-scale hand-industries that are spread all over the country. This is the meaning of our saying that our country lives and works in its villages. But what is the position which obtains today ? These small hand-industries heavily suffer from the unfair competition of large-scale urban industries. They hardly count for anything in our economy. The fact however is patent that it is agriculture and these small industries which produce a substantial part of the wealth of the country. Still they are not given proper consideration or their due weight in the industrial policy of the country. They go on living however. The reason is they have such vitality that they cannot be killed or destroyed. The first thing for the government to consider therefore while framing its industrial policy is to protect the village and cottage industries. The large-scale private industries are powerful enough. They can easily take care of themselves even without government wasting consideration on them. If support or protection is needed it is for these small village and cottage industries operating in the whole of the country. Unless they are protected, maintained and allowed to thrive against the competition of the others we could not hope to save the people from unemployment. Nor can we hope to produce enough wealth. Government, therefore, should directly undertake to protect them.

An objection is here raised. Suppose you begin controlling the mills and factories. Will they not stop working altogether? Will not industrialists give up their job ? Will this position not create difficulties for the country and the people themselves? Shall we not suffer from scarcity of goods and shortage of supply ? Will it not lead to unemployment of industrial labourers ?

Firstly, how far would it be true to say that the mill-owners and factory-owners are trustees who hold themselves responsible for supply of goods and things ? But let us grant that their activities result in this indirect advantage to the people as a whole. Still the objection raised is more or less imaginary. The mill-owners and factory-owners do want to exist. They do want to occupy themselves usefully and gainfully. It may be accepted that they would like to get out of the industries controlled by government if they can find more suitable occupation or employment elsewhere. That however would be something for the nation to welcome. For, if the mills closed because their owners refused to run them it would mean that the people have found their way to supply their needs by village and cottage industries. More, because the need has arisen these industries would as a matter of course begin to thrive.

Let us, however for argument's sake, assume that there is some shortage of goods and things during the transition from one order to the other. How can that be any cause to be afraid of or to be panicky ? If found necessary government itself can undertake to run those industries for a while. Besides, the people have already at their service the village and cottage industries boards set up by government itself. They can be easily worked to meet the shortage. Government too would be aiding them by propaganda and other substantial aid. The people also must have by the time begun to feel hopeful and enthusiastic about these industries. And the government we have today is not a foreign government. Indeed, it is the people's own government and it has adopted the encouragement of these industries as its policy. All over the country people are clamouring for employment. Industries that they know how to run and can start very easily are already in existence. The one thing lacking is a clarification of

and certainty about government policy and its firm execution. This purpose cannot be served by setting apart a few lacs or say even a few crores of rupees and allotting them to small industries. This is something in fact more fundamental. It is to set our whole people to the work of production and to build the economic and industrial policy of the country on an entirely new basis. Unless we adopted it, and sooner rather than later, we cannot hope to establish an order based on the socialist pattern which means, if anything, equality for all or Sarvodaya ; nor can we hope to reach the goal of the welfare state which our constitution has envisaged ; nor can we hope our people to turn to the democratic way of life and government.

4-2-'55

(From the original in Gujarati)

MISTAKEN TREND IN INDIAN EDUCATION

(*By Maganbhai P. Desai*)

I have, on my pending file for review, an article (*Leader*, October 12, 1954) by Dr. Shri Sampurnanand, now the Chief Minister of U.P. It is headed, ' A Dangerous Trend in Indian Education '. It seems to have been occasioned by, and as a reply to, the address by Shri S. N. Agarwal as the President of the U. P. Secondary Education Conference at Moradabad. I have not seen the text of that address. What Shri Sampurnanand takes exception to in it is " the trend......that education should be linked up with the problem of employment,.......should be integrated with the economic framework of society."

As I said above, I do not exactly know what Shri S. N. Agarwal said in his address. Surely Basic Education as conceived by Gandhiji, was not what Shri Sampurnanand takes exception to. Though I wonder whether there can ever be a sound system of really national education which is not related to the economic or social needs of the community.

Shri Sampurnanand agrees that Basic Education is good for the earlier stages,* but he says, " it appears to me that any attempt to carry these principles into the secondary and still more into the university sphere may be seriously to hamper the growth of knowledge ". He also admits, " I do not agree with Mr Mirza Ismail when he says that Basic Education as applied to the pre-secondary stage is a retreat from civilization, but I do feel most strongly that we shall be making a grievous mistake in making a fetish of it and trying to carry it into regions which are beyond its legitimate domain."

To my mind, the difference between the two positions, one of Shri Mirza and the other of Shri Sampurnanand, is only of degree and emphasis here or there. Both the positions fundamentally arise out of a mistaken idea of what Gandhiji described as Basic Education. It would have been more proper for an educationalist of Shri Sampurnanand's eminence to discuss Basic Education in terms of what Gandhiji meant by it. Shri Sampurnanand discusses it as if Basic Education is mere vocational or technical education, and pits it as utilitarian education against general education for the whole man, forgetting at that time that what actually goes on at present is not really the stuff he stands for. How, otherwise, would he perorate at the end as follows :

> " Those of us who believe in the teaching of the sages of India believe that ज्ञान (knowledge) is the स्वरूप– the very essence and nature of the जीवात्मा (jivatma) and that the highest पुरुषार्थ (object) in life of the ego, is the realization of itself. In any scheme of social, economic or educational reconstruction, knowledge must be placed on a supreme pedestal and recognized as possessing an importance by and of itself, entirely unconnected with, and independent of, any use to which it might incidentally lend itself."

I am afraid, this might create, in the mind of an unwary reader, the impression that Basic Education is something that goes against the grain of the teachings of our ancient sages and is a detraction in a way from ज्ञान and पुरुषार्थ. That this is wholly wrong is obvious.

There is also in the statement a fallacy that knowledge as we usually understand it is confused with what our Shastras say as ज्ञान. For example, see its definition in the Gita, (Chapter XIII — 7 to 11). ज्ञान is the *summum bonum* of human life ; while knowledge may mean, as it usually does today, पांडित्य– mere book learning or conceptual information. It is true that the पुरुषार्थ of our universities as they are today is alleged to be for the latter, though even there they are a miserable failure. But it is a different matter. What is to be noted here is that this knowledge may be wholly irrelevant, if not a veritable hindrance, to the pursuit of real ज्ञान, as Isha Upanishad warns us in one of its verses.

The real aim of Basic Education, as shown to us by Gandhiji, was to restore the present educational system in India to a truly general type of education of the whole man, and recover the values of our ancient education which was a real pursuit of ज्ञान or the true meaning of Life. And what has been the chief and real defect

* It may be noted here that Basic Education was not thought of as having three stages, as we generally know them. Gandhiji envisaged Basic Education as the general education for the common citizen in India. All that was needed further was special or further education according to the needs and capacities as also the aptitudes of the recipient. This education may be surely from the point of view of employment ; what he said was that this also must be self-supporting and directly related to the life of the Community.

of English Education in India? It will surprise some, but it is clear that English Education, by and large, has been mainly utilitarian and vocational. It was pre-eminently meant and grew and developed to be an aid to British rule in India and to supply necessary professional personnel, official and non-official, for it. To ignore this big and fundamental drawback in it and to decry Basic Education on the high-sounding plea of ज्ञान and पुरुषार्थ, will unfortunately come to ignoring the realities and misunderstanding what Basic Education really is. It will give a mischievous handle to reactionaries like Shri Mirza Ismail and others to cling to the *status quo*. It is in this context that Basic Education is a revolutionary doctrine in Education. And I make bold to say that, it is also true in terms of the teachings of our old sages as well. ज्ञान to be really worth the name must be born of अनुभूति, i.e. must grow from life-experience. Knowledge or विद्या must be integrally related to it; otherwise it will degenerate itself into अविद्या which is worse than bondage — a greater bondage. The reader will excuse me for quoting here from the Publisher's note of *The Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*, wherein is shortly described what Gandhiji's view of education was in terms of the Gita philosophy. This is reproduced elsewhere in this issue.

It is hoped we shall try to translate this view of education in the system of education that free India is attempting to set up now. Basic Education, viewed and understood this way, is a very desirable and urgently necessary reform.

30-12-'54

By Mahatma Gandhi

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NOTES

Use *v.* Possession

Sometime, somewhere, man will wake up and realize that property is there only to be used, not possessed. He will realize that possession is a kind of illness of the spirit and a hopeless burden upon the spontaneous Self. The little pronouns 'my' and 'our' will lose all their mystic spell.

The question of property will never be settled till people cease to care for property. Then it will settle itself. A man needs only so much as well help him to his own fulfilments. Surely, the individual who wants a motor car merely for the sake of having it and riding it, is as hopeless an automaton as the motor car itself.

All settlement of the property question must arise spontaneously out of the new impulse in man to free himself from the extraneous load of possession and walk naked and light....If we are to keep our back unbroken, we must deposit all property on the ground and learn to walk without it. We must stand aside. And when many men stand aside they stand in a new world. A new world of man has then come to pass. This is Democracy — the New Order.

D. H. LAWRENCE

[The pronouns 'I' and 'my' or 'ours' have given to Indian languages the words 'अहंता' and 'ममता' ego and sense of property — pride and acquisitiveness. These are, indeed, held by us as 'illness of the Spirit' of which we are here on this earth to cure ourselves.

This idea must govern not only our individual spiritual life, but also our social or corporate life and morality. It is here that the vital distinction between use and possession, between utility and ownership comes in. In mundane terms, we do possess earthly goods. Is not even the body our richest and the primest possession? However, the ethics of such possession lies in the use we make of it, and the need we have for it. Superfluity or surfeit of possession is not only a burden, but is theft or usurpation from the community's common pool or wealth. Possession is therefore not owning, but is trust, which while helping us helps society also through its proper use. Owning is possible or justified only through its right use.

4-2-'55 M. P.]

Cruel Exportation of Monkeys

To

The Editor of *Harijan*,

Sir,

I have today received a letter from the Secretary of British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection, 47, Whitehall, London, S.W.1 in which he says:

> "You quote Pandit Nehru as saying that 'bad means should never be adopted even to gain right ends'; but when I wrote to Pandit Nehru asking him to intervene and stop the traffic in monkeys sent from India to laboratories in America and Europe, he did not reply. It has just been reported in our (British) newspapers that he (Shri Nehru) actually gave an interview to the man who exports most of these monkeys. The man's name is Mr T. E. Patterson and he was once a London policeman. He exports about 90,000 monkeys each year from India."

People of our country are famous all over the world for their kindness towards animals. It is sincerely to be hoped that Mr Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, will abandon this

policy of exporting the unfortunate monkeys for wicked vivisection purposes. Monkeys should never be sent to other countries where they are so cruelly ill-treated.

Woodhouse Road, SORABJI R. MISTRI
Colaba, Bombay

A TREMENDOUS TRIFLE

(*By T. Krishna Murthy*)

The assets of any nation or any society are its natural resources which go to fulfil the primary necessity of its citizens. India has all these in abundance. But still she had to face an alarming shortage of food. This grave challenge has been accepted by our democratic leaders. Our Government is pouring a great part of the country's revenue for this endeavour in producing chemical manures, constructing huge dams, and importing tractors and technicians from the United States. But the pity is, it has forgotten to make use of an indigenous boon which can assure a substantial increase in our food production. One such assuring boon is our bee-keeping industry. This may look a trifle; but, one has to admit, it is a *Tremendous Trifle*.

The honey bee, as the name itself indicates, supplies us with Nature's most perfect sweet food — honey on one hand, and on the other hand, it renders indispensable service to agriculture. The Indians have sanctified it by regarding honey as nectar. Even modern science cannot deny its nutritive value and benefits to health. Canada produces about thirtysix million pounds of honey every year, which is worth about 7.5 crores of rupees. But India is allowing such a valuable source of wealth almost untapped. Crores of rupees worth of honey dries up in the sun, awaiting its utility. This is like having a wellbred cow and allowing it to go un-milked, merely because there is no one to milk it.

Honey which has got a very high nutritive value is nowadays being used mostly for medical purposes. This is so because of its scanty production.

In foreign countries like Canada and Australia bee-keeping is taken up not only because of honey and bee-wax, but also because of the valuable part bees play in the country's agriculture. It is a fact well-known to all ranging from an illiterate farmer, right up to a qualified botanist, that all buds that flower do not result in fruits. Many fade away, unsuccessful in their mission of bearing fruits, because they were not fortunate to be pollinated. There are several pollinating agents in Nature, and the major of them is the honey bee. Each bee visits thousands of flowers everyday, makes a lot of honey by sucking nectar, and in return pollinates them. It is a scientifically proved fact that honey bees pollinate 90 per cent of the farm and the fruit crops of the world. It is also learnt that production from bee-keeping industry, through agriculture and gardening, is 15 times more when compared to production in the form of honey and wax.

It is a pity that we have neglected this industrial aspect of farming at a very heavy cost of losing more than half of the crop yield. It is extremely unfortunate that an agricultural country like India should have great scarcity of honey bees. Even those that are existing are being destroyed by the unscientific methods of honey extraction. The colonies are burnt and the honey combs are squeezed along with the brood and the eggs. This not only makes the honey adulterated but also leaves no bee to survive and supply honey for a second time.

The Government should at least now pay attention it deserves and work for its development and propagation. There are some institutions like the village industries department of the Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh and some State Governments like Bombay which have developed a better technique in taming bees and honey extraction. But much is yet to be done in this important field.

THE WAY OF KARMAYOGA IN EDUCATION

Gandhiji all his life had been a teacher of man, irrespective of class or creed, caste or colour, sex or race. It was from that larger aspect of his personality that he was required to touch all sides of man's life on earth, — its progress and development. Therefore he dealt with the problem of education and developed it not merely for the mural limits of a school, but also for other and wider fields of various human activities. His view of education, therefore, was to evolve the whole man in us, whom God has created in His own image. Hence education, according to him, encompassed the entire vista of man's life on earth, from conception to cremation if not before or beyond it.

Such a view of education was born of a philosophy that holds that education is indivisible; therefore it does not agree to compartmentalize or departmentalize man's life and its problems as individual apart from social, biological apart from ethical, physiological apart from metaphysical or spiritual. All these contradictory-looking aspects of our being dovetailed themselves in his view as one whole which man surely is and should undoubtedly be so considered; and his peculiar genius as the great teacher of men gave us also a similarly whole technique for the realization of such an entity.

Very often Gandhiji described himself as one who had not really discovered any new thing, but had only translated or redefined the hoary truths for the modern age and had chiefly tried to apply them to the group-life of man in society. These truths were well known as guiding our individual life, but more often than not they were ignored or, if at all, observed only in their breach

when it came to the questions of collective or group-life of the individual. So was it in the case of Satyagraha, his greatest discovery as the moral equivalent of war. A technique was devised by him whereby Truth and Non-violence were to be operative in group-life as well.

This peculiarity of Gandhiji's genius is apparent in his educational discovery of Basic Education as well. To put it in the terminology of the Gita, he only showed us the way of Karmayoga in education. The principle of life and creation, according to the Gita is tersely laid down in its following two verses:

> "From food springs all life, from rain is born food: from यज्ञ — sacrifice comes rain, and sacrifice is the result of Karma — action."
>
> "Know that action springs from Brahma and Brahma from the Imperishable; hence the all-pervading Brahma is ever firm-founded on sacrifice." (Chap. 3-14, 15).

From this principle the Gita derives the eternal law of life which is Yajna, and enjoins the following law of man's education and advancement:

> "Together with यज्ञ — sacrifice did the Lord of beings create, of old, mankind, declaring, by this shall ye increase (evolve and progress); may this be to you the giver of all your desires."
>
> "With this may you cherish the gods and may the gods cherish you; thus cherishing one another may you attain the highest good." (Chap. 3-10, 11).

Man achieves all his good by action. It should therefore be productive of the goods that sustain life. It has therefore to be a co-operative effort of mutual aid and respect for others. And it is through such action, which is sacrifice, that man educates and frees himself of bondage. This is the law of man's education through life. It is his real education for freedom. Applied to a child's education, it says that the child also learns through doing and associating himself with action which is integrally related to the life of the society. Such action, if divorced of life-needs, will render its doer either a parasite or a pest to human society; it will jeopardize the health of the community. As the Gita says (Chap. 3-12), it will land us in sin and bondage. It will thus mean mal-education for a child. Thus only can education be for life or for a democratic society or for real freedom of all. That is the type of education for Sarvodaya. Gandhiji's view of education was thus a derivative from his general philosophy of life which was Karmayoga. The craft that is to be the medium of *education* was to be done intelligently and with the full understanding of its know-how. Then only can it be Karmayoga, i.e. synthesis of action and knowledge. It is such a synthetic method of teaching which, Gandhiji said, was the true and natural way of a child's education. It is therefore bound to be the best way also.

(From the Publisher's note to Dr. Patel's book, *The Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*)

ECONOMICS OF PROHIBITION

(*By Maganbhai P. Desai*)

This is from a news bulletin, from Bombay:

> "All the 19 Backward Class families which were contacted by the Backward Class Welfare Officers in the course of their tours during the third quarter of 1954 have testified to the immense benefits of prohibition. As many as 36 members of these 19 families from eight villages were addicted to liquor and all of them gave up drinking following the introduction of prohibition.
>
> Out of the 19 families, four have purchased lands and four have also purchased bullocks for cultivation. One of the families has purchased six acres of land and another eight acres. Nine families have paid off their debts in full, two of them of Rs 2,000 each.
>
> Four families built decent houses. Their previous houses were nothing more than huts.
>
> Formerly the children in these nineteen families were not going to school but now the children in 14 families are reported to be attending school. There are no children of school-going age in the remaining five families.
>
> Womenfolk in the families stated that before prohibition they were being beaten and ill-treated by their husbands and there used to be quarrels in their families but now they were leading a peaceful life.
>
> All the 19 families have improved their social and economic condition due to prohibition. They are also now respected by fellow villagers. Some of them have become members of co-operative farming societies also."

It conclusively answers those who still have doubts regarding the economic benefits of prohibition to the people. But they may perhaps add, what about the economics of State Governments? Do they not lose the revenue? This argument is also getting rather stale, in view of our two prohibitionist provinces, Bombay and Madras, having conclusively demonstrated that the budget can be balanced and money can be found for development programmes also.

The *Alert* of January 1955 quotes the famous English statesman, W. E. Gladstone, on this point which is a complete answer to this question:

> "Do not speak to me about revenue from strong drink. Give me a people who do not squander their substance on strong drink and I will find an easy way to raise the necessary revenue to carry on the Government."......"The ravages of drink are greater than those of war, pestilence and famine combined."

We hope, the untenable economic argument against prohibition will no more be heard as any way reasonable or valid. Income from drink, I believe, is bad under the Directive Principles of State Policy as laid down by the Constitution of India.

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